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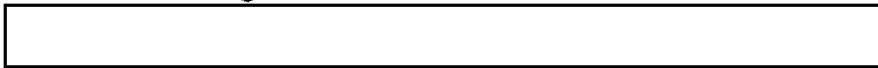
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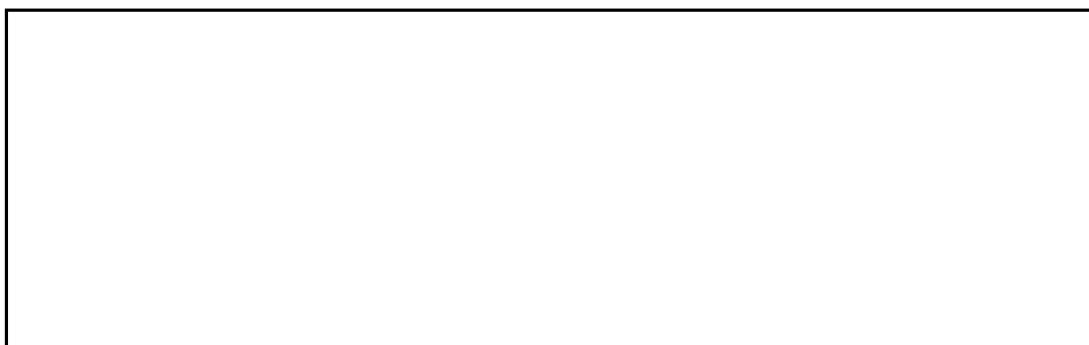
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**4. MERGER OF JAPANESE CONSERVATIVE PARTIES
REPORTEDLY SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER**

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[REDACTED]

Prime Minister Hatoyama informed Ambassador Allison and former governor Dewey on 21 October that a merger of Japanese conservative parties would take place in November, "at least in form." He said the Liberals had agreed to support the Democratic Party policies during the coming extraordinary session of the Diet.

Top leaders of the Democratic Party stated flatly that the merger would take place on 3 November, and the third Hatoyama cabinet would be formed on 10 November. Secretary General Kishi of the Democratic Party also stated that he was "firmly confident" the merger would take place, indicating that the deal had firmed up in the last few days when the Liberals had "given in."

Comment

While some progress toward a merger has been evident from a Liberal-Democratic agreement on 21 October to set up a "new party preparatory committee," statements by Liberal leaders as late as 22 October continue to be critical of the government. It is possible that Democratic strategy is to pressure the Liberals into an agreement by trying to commit them in the presence of prominent Americans.

The major block to the merger has been the Liberals' unwillingness to accept Hatoyama as the leader of the new party. If the Liberals have given in on this point, they probably have insisted on some future commitment as to Hatoyama's retirement, and his replacement by Liberal Party president Ogata.

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